

Dog Saved From Rising Floodwaters After Storm

Search-and-rescue teams attempt to help pets affected by Hurricane Ike.

Posted: September 17, 2008, 5 a.m. EDT

Photos courtesy IFAW/M.Booth A male Rottweiler who was left chained to the porch of his house when Hurricane Ike blew through Louisiana was among the family pets rescued Monday by a search-and-rescue team representing International Fund for Animal Welfare.

IFAW Emergency Rescue team member Mike Booth was at the scene in Lake Charles, La., and said the Rottweiler was exhausted from trying to get above water on its hind legs. A neighbor tried to free the animal, but got bit by the panicking dog, and this is when IFAW received the call, Booth said.

"High tide was soon approaching, which would surely drown the chained dog," he said. "Luckily, the team arrived just in time to cut the collar and pull the dog out to safety. At the moment, the Rottweiler is safe in the Calcasieu Animal Control Shelter."

IFAW is the designated water operations search-and-rescue team in Calcasieu Parish, La. "There is significant flooding in the area and local residents said they haven't seen this degree of damage in more than 50 or 80 years, more so than with Katrina or Rita," Booth said.

On Tuesday, the rescue team mobilized to Beaumont, Texas, where they expect to help out with animal sheltering operations, along with various other organizations. Animal response to Hurricane Ike continues to be a team effort, as the issues are much larger than the resources of one agency can address, according to the Texas Animal Health Commission.

The TAHC has sourced pet cages from Louisiana to boost the local sheltering capacity. Early estimates from shelters providing reports show that 1,200 small animals were provided emergency refuge. This does not include persons sheltering their pets in temporary housing or individuals providing sheltering space.

Also assisting with relief efforts is the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles, which arrived Monday morning with its Disaster Animal Response Team to Houston, Texas, per the request of state authorities. The team will provide temporary shelter and veterinary care to the animal victims of Hurricane Ike.

"Very often, our pets are what keep us going in times of crisis," said Madeline Bernstein, SPCALA president. "DART not only provides for animals, but allows their owners to breathe a sigh of relief knowing there are professionals out there looking after the safety of their pets."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Ike, PetSmart Charities is among the organizations looking out for displaced animals. An Emergency Relief Waggin' stocked with 16 tons of supplies was sent to one of the hardest-hit areas of Southeast Texas.

The 53-foot trailer is loaded with 26 pallets of pet supplies and emergency relief equipment for rescuers and caregivers and bound for the Humane Society of Southeast Texas in Beaumont. Supplies include pet food, crates, beds, bowls, litter, and litter pans, as well as a generator, fans, tents, a battery charger, and lights to assist the volunteers on site who are caring for the companion animals.